

The Board of Laity honored 13 churches with the "It Worked for Us" awards, which were presented May 31, 2011 during the "Celebrate the Laity" Luncheon at Annual Conference. These annual awards honor a church in each district for an outstanding lay-led ministry. This list of project descriptions hints at the wide-ranging faith work under way across Oklahoma.

After-School Program

Pauls Valley-First UMC, Ardmore District

The "After School" program provides a hands-on approach to make sure that students of our school district have the help they need to succeed. Each week they are provided with a light snack, tutoring assistance, an opportunity to learn new skills, and just good old fashion fun as a part of this program. Approximately 30 grade school students are involved, and seven or eight volunteers give of their time on a weekly basis. This wonderful outreach is both intergenerational and interracial with the majority of the participants being non-members of First UMC.

Prayer Stitchers

Oak Park UMC, Bartlesville District

Since 2010, this group of women of all ages have crocheted, knitted and sewn more than 60 prayer shawls, pillows, lap robes, afghans, prayer roses, and quilts to give to people suffering from illness or other hard times. The items are blessed during church services. The fellowship among the women is terrific. When they gather, they share faith testimonials and devotions, along with refreshments. Young women from the neighborhood are starting to attend and are learning new skills from the older women. Our VIM team has taken their offerings with us when we go to Casa Esperanza for the cancer patients and their families. The handmade items bring a lot of joy to the recipients, as is evident by tears and big smiles we see when give them out.

Summer Free Lunch Program

Mangum UMC, Clinton District

In response to the large number of elementary school children who participate in the free/reduced school lunch program, our church offers free hot lunches every day, Monday through Friday, during summer vacation. In 2010, we served an average of fifty meals each day. This ministry brings many children to our church and gives us the chance to show Christ's love to them. Our congregation has become more fruitful through the increased involvement of the laity as volunteers in the program.

Back Pack Program

Erick UMC, Clinton District

Erick-First UMC, was looking for a way to connect to the community. We discovered that 50% of the students here are on a free and/or reduced lunch program. The only time that many receive food is breakfast and lunch at school. We were told that many children had behavioral problems and poor work performance on Mondays, which they attributed to poor nutrition on the weekends. With the schools permission and help, we sent out letters to parents asking permission to send backpacks filled with food home on Friday, and for them to returned the bags to us on the following Monday. We are now feeding as many as 70 children each weekend and during school breaks.

Girl's Night

Lamont-First UMC, Enid District

Girl's Night was started as a response to the dwindling numbers of our UMW unit. It was decided that we would start having a 'Girls Night', which would become our new UMW unit. We started with five ladies and it has grown to approximately 12. We meet in the evening once a month, share in fellowship and food, have a devotion with a lesson, and we have a guest speaker occasionally. Our group consists of members, non-members and those who do not have a church home. One of our ministries is hosting the Senior Center noon meal monthly.

Bibles for the Congo

Tulsa-Asbury UMC, Tulsa District

The Congo Bible initiative was a 6-week fundraising effort to buy native language Bibles for UM believers in the Democratic Republic of Congo in south central Africa. Bibles are so scarce there pastors routinely have to walk 12-20 miles to the only Bible in the region. While there the pastors memorize the scriptures they will preach from the next month, then they return home to preach from memory. Very few pastors or churches, and almost no lay people have a Bible in their native heart language. Our initial goal was to raise \$120,000 to provide 10,000 Bibles. When the donations were totaled, God had raised more than \$270,000 to provide more than 22,000 native language Bibles and Proclaimers.

Community Children's Program

OKC-Lambuth UMC, SOKC District

Baby Bellas

Frederick-First UMC, Lawton District

First UMC is reaching more young people for Christ through its UMW's ministry. They wanted to begin a fourth circle designed especially for teenage girls called the Baby Bellas. The sponsoring circle is the Isabella Circle and each month the Isabellas meet with the Baby Bellas for breakfast, fellowship and prayer. Each Baby Bella is also matched with an Isabella for mentoring and prayer. The combined group, 10 Isabella adults and 20 Baby Bella teenage girls, traveled to Dallas for the "Revolve Tour." Revolve is a large gathering of teen girls and is designed to encourage them in their spiritual growth.

Students with a Mission (SWAM)

Barnard Memorial UMC, McAlester District

The SWAM Club was started as a way to show high school students that there are many opportunities for them to serve in God's mission now, and opportunities for them to choose missionary work as their vocation. The first step was to find out what the requirements were for starting a Christian club at the high school. A faculty sponsor was recruited, UMW and UMM sponsorship for providing lunches was secured, a request was written and submitted to the school board, which they approved unanimously. The spring 2010 semester was spent discussing mission, electing officers, and picking a mission project. The students picked assembling health kits for UMCOR as their mission project. The students were able to collect enough items to assemble and ship 52 health kits. Each semester they have had a hands-on mission day, leaving school for 2 hours to work at the local food bank or clothing ministry.

Praise on Wheels

Wesley UMC, Muskogee District

We are a small membership congregation with an average attendance of 32. Our laity had the vision to have evening worship one evening a month to provide an opportunity to share devotion and music in a prayer and praise setting. Though it was good and spirit filled, it was not well attended and need a boost. At Christmas we gathered for caroling and decided to sing at 12 homes that we thought would enjoy the fellowship. One lady said that she missed being able to go to church and though the preacher came by it wasn't the same as being with her church family. Now each month one of our laity calls these families to set a time for evening worship. We load up the bus sometimes stopping at a nursing home and other times at the home of members. We believe we have purpose mission and ministry we can do.

Arts Academy

OKC-Crown Heights UMC, NOKC District

Learning to play piano and guitar, as well as violin and drums, are only some of the classes offered for elementary students at OKC-Crown Heights Arts Academy.

Funny Farm

Morrison UMC, Stillwater District

In March 2008, Morrison UMC members, C.R. and Rita Frank, opened the doors of the "Funny Farm" a youth center in downtown Morrison, which is open every Friday night to children from 3-18 years of age. Volunteers join together to offer youth a refuge of safety filled with video games, pool tables, foosball, basketball, and many other forms of entertainment. Attendance averages around 100 youth with anywhere from 8 to 15 volunteers. As the doors close at 11 p.m. volunteers and kids alike go home smiling, and making plans to be back at the "Funny Farm" next week.

Mission of the Month

Sharon UMC, Woodward District

After much discussion and prayer, we decided to try a "Mission of the Month." In March 2010, our mission was UMCOR Health Kits that were collected at Annual Conference. Through our "Mission of the Month," we have collected food for our community pantry, made quilts and collected baby items for the pregnancy center, donated items to be sent to our men and women in the military, collected school supplies for our school, donated cleaning supplies and other items to the Domestic Crisis Center, purchased and donated books to our school library, collected toys for the Woodward County Toy Giveaway, distributed items through Project Noel, donated paper goods and cleaning supplies to the Wesley House at Northwestern OSU, and collected bottled water and supplies for our firefighters.